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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

**Summary record of the 12th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 16 October 2000, at 10 a.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. Kiwanuka ..... (Uganda)

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Agenda item 83: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 83: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space** (A/55/20, A/55/153)

1. **The Chairman** said that the United Nations had begun the consideration of the peaceful uses of outer space at the very start of the space age, a period marked by the launch of the first satellite in October 1957. Even then, the international community had been concerned that it was only a few countries with an advanced degree of technological and economic development that were able to explore and utilize outer space to their own benefit.

2. Outer space had now become an arena for international cooperation. What had started as the "space race" would culminate in the historic launch of a space flight to begin the permanent habitation of the International Space Station, a project in which 16 countries had participated.

3. Outer space had become an arena for international cooperation not by mere coincidence, but because over the years many countries had stressed the importance of international cooperation through the work of the United Nations and had made efforts to ensure that outer space was explored and utilized only for peaceful purposes. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space continued to provide an essential forum for discussing the exploration and uses of outer space. The United Nations had cemented international cooperation by establishing the international legal regime governing outer space activities.

4. The United Nations also played an important role in ensuring that the benefits of space activities were shared by developing countries. Efforts had to be strengthened in that area, however, even though more developing countries were now using space technologies for their social and economic development. The challenge was to meet the basic needs of people in developing countries. Many countries were aware of the usefulness of space science and technology for social and economic development, but that did not necessarily mean that space benefits were really reaching the people who needed them the most. Many people in developing countries, as well as their governments, could not afford those useful space tools. Even if they gained access to such tools through international cooperation, many did not know how to use them.

5. Efforts to promote the peaceful uses of outer space should focus on increasing educational opportunities for people from the developing countries in the fields of space science and technology. People around the world should be informed that space applications could improve their lives. The Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) had come up with a strategy to strengthen such efforts at the global level. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had already taken steps to turn that strategy into concrete actions. It had made progress, among other things, in identifying a mechanism to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III, establishing partnerships with non-governmental organizations, involving young people in space activities and increasing public awareness of space benefits.

6. Following a recommendation of UNISPACE III, the General Assembly had declared the week of 4 to 10 October World Space Week. Special events had been held for the public in almost 30 countries as part of World Space Week. He hoped that more governments, organizations and indivduals around the world would take steps to promote the use of space benefits to meet the needs of people in the developing countries. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space would continue to lead the international efforts towards that goal.

7. **Mr. González** (Chile), Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, said that drawing on a consensus, the Committee had done a great deal of useful work and had made a significant contribution to the creation of the international legal regime governing outer space activities. One of the Committee's major achievements had been the convening of UNISPACE III, at which the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development had been adopted by consensus. The Declaration contained a series of recommendations on activities in such areas as environmental protection, rational use of resources, the application of space technology to guaranteeing the security, development and well-being of people, public information, etc. The measures recommended by UNISPACE III could further the achievement of goals in other areas of United Nations activities and promote

the realization of important initiatives in the development of human potential.

8. Submitting the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, he noted that it covered such matters as ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes, the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-seventh session, the work of the Legal Subcommittee at its thirty-ninth session and spin-off benefits of space technology. The Committee and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had made major progress in the adoption of concrete measures to carry out the recommendations of UNISPACE III. The Committee had identified a mechanism for implementing those recommendations and, in the period 2001 to 2004, would devote a separate agenda item to the consideration of progress made in that area. The Committee had also considered the plan of action proposed by the Office for Outer Space Affairs in compliance with the General Assembly's request to ensure that the Office be provided with adequate resources to implement specific actions based on the recommendations of UNISPACE III. The measures proposed in that regard covered the strengthening of the role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subsidiary bodies; the implementation of programmes for capacity-building in the field of space law; the development of new training modules and projects for the application of scientific and technological achievements to outer space; and public information activities.

9. One of the main recommendations of UNISPACE III concerned a better partnership with industry, and the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had accordingly organized for the first time a symposium to study submissions by space industries. In 2001 a symposium was to be organized on the theme of applications of global navigation satellite systems in improving the productivity of national and regional infrastructure.

10. Another area in which progress had been made was public information. In accordance with the General Assembly's decision to declare 4 to 10 October World Space Week, the Office for Outer Space Affairs had developed a plan for its celebration. Representatives of all Member States, international organizations dealing with outer space and many scientific centres and museums had been invited to participate in the events. Another important matter connected with the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III was availability of resources. In accordance with the Conference's recommendation that a special voluntary fund be established, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to modify the terms of reference of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications to include implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III. In line with the request of the General Assembly, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had agreed on a list of priority project proposals for inclusion in the Secretary-General's letter of invitation regarding contributions to the Trust Fund.

11. At the 2000 session, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had also considered such topics as international cooperation in human spaceflight, use of nuclear power sources in outer space, space debris and space commercialization. In connection with the last-named topic, he said that during the session, the Committee on Space Research and the International Astronautical Federation had organized a symposium on the theme "Space commercialization: an era of new opportunities". In recognition of the contribution made by those two institutions, the Committee had adopted a recommendation to invite them to arrange a symposium on the theme "Terrestrial hazards from outer space objects and phenomena" during the Subcommittee's next session. The Committee had recommended the inclusion in the agenda for the Subcommittee's next session of the following three new topics: means of and mechanisms for strengthening international cooperation and increasing the use of space applications and services within and among entities of the United Nations system; creation of an integrated, space-based global natural disaster management system; and government and private activities to promote education in space science and engineering.

12. Turning to the activities of the Legal Subcommittee, he said it had continued to consider matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and to the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit and, at its thirty-ninth session, had finally agreed on recommendations on that topic. In accordance with the three-year work plan, it had begun its review of the concept of "launching State" which it would pursue at its next session. During the Legal Subcommittee's thirty-ninth session, the International Institute of Space Law and the European Centre for Space Law had organized a symposium on legal

aspects of space commercialization. Intensive discussion was given by the Subcommittee to new agenda items for its next session and it was agreed to consider the draft convention prepared by the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law on international interests in mobile equipment and the preliminary draft protocol thereto on matters specific to space property.

13. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had endorsed the recommendation of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee that a colloquium on the theme "The human dimension in space science and technology applications" should be organized during the Committee's next session with the participation of eminent scientists, sociologists and philosophers. The Committee had also considered the issue of enlargement of its membership and had recommended that it be included in the agenda of its next session.

14. One of the challenges in future years would be to link the achievements of science and technology with the development of human potential. The exchange of information on existing space technology and sharing of access to it were important, but they were not sufficient. Measures had to be adopted with a view to ensuring that the benefits of the application of such achievements could be used by all those living in extreme poverty in the developing countries. Eliminating poverty was not only the goal of the development process but also a challenge of the utmost importance for the enjoyment of human rights in the twenty-first century, and the application of space technology could help to ensure that the populations of developing countries were able to exercise basic human rights. In that connection, international cooperation in space was of great importance. Many countries were carrying out joint space programmes. The participation of non-governmental institutions in such cooperation must also be facilitated, and the private sector and non-governmental organizations had an important role to play in that regard. That role had been acknowledged with the adoption by the General Assembly in 1996 of the Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and Interest of All States, Taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries.

15. **Mr. Bossière** (France) spoke on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, the associated countries of Cyprus and Malta and a member of the European Economic Area, Norway, aligned themselves with his statement.

16. The European Union participated actively in space activities and carried out a variety of scientific projects, including for the development of the automatic satellite navigation system "Galileo" and a global monitoring system for environmental protection and safety which would have practical applications in a broad range of fields, including the prevention of natural and man-made disasters and the mitigation of their effects.

17. The European Union welcomed the report adopted at UNISPACE III in 1999 in Vienna, which provided for concrete measures to be taken in areas such as environmental protection and rational use of resources, enhancing scientific knowledge about outer space, protection of the space environment and development of international cooperation in that area. The European Union supported the plan of action for the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III endorsed by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its June 2000 session.

18. The European Union held the view that space activities must be carried out in line with two fundamental principles, namely that space technology must promote social, economic and cultural development as well as the protection of the terrestrial and spatial environment and that access to outer space must be regulated on an equitable basis in the light of the real needs of the developing countries. At its twenty-ninth session, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had requested that consideration be given to situations in which scientific and technical progress could pose a threat to society. The European Space Agency had accordingly developed three principles, namely the provision of free access to outer space as part of the common heritage of mankind, the creation of conditions for unimpeded observation of the universe by astrophysicists and the use of outer space with due regard for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In that connection he drew attention to the need for priority consideration to be given to measures to eliminate space debris, including through the disposal of satellites in geostationary orbit at the end of their

useful life and reducing the danger of explosion of upper stages of launch missiles. In conclusion, he called for a solution to be found to the shortfall in resources of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, whose budget for the upcoming biennium had been reduced.

19. **Mr. Ri** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that outer space had become one of the fields in which the disparity between developed and developing countries was the most serious. A few countries that possessed outer space technology were commercializing the results of scientific study of outer space and, setting political conditions, were attempting to avoid the transfer of technology to developing countries and even obstructing, without any substantiated reasons, the self-supported outer space exploration of such countries. Some States were openly ignoring the relevant international laws and abusing outer space in pursuit of military predominance: they talked, for example, about a theatre missile defence system and a national missile defence system. It was intolerable that certain countries should take issue with his country's launch of an artificial satellite with a view to justifying their own efforts towards the militarization of outer space.

20. In order to achieve real international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space in the new century, the following problems had to be resolved. First, the right of developing countries to the exploration of outer space should be respected and steps must be taken to ensure that all countries benefited equally from the results of outer space exploration in accordance with article I of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. The United Nations should endeavour to make the scientific and technological results of outer space exploration contribute directly to the sustainable development of the developing countries. In that regard it was necessary to set up a mechanism to ensure that the results of outer space technology served the majority of human beings. Second, in order to ensure the success of peaceful exploration of outer space in the twenty-first century, militarization must be ended. One of the priorities should be the dismantling of military satellites that violated and threatened the sovereignty of other countries and, in particular, prevention of the creation of a national missile defence system and theatre missile defence system that used satellites in outer space. The Office for Outer Space Affairs and the Legal Subcommittee must devote much more attention to taking decisive steps to stop the militarization of outer space.

21. After the successful launch of its first artificial satellite on 31 August 1998, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had entered into a new stage of self-supported development of outer space science and technology. The satellite launch had been peaceful in all aspects and constituted a contribution to the development of outer space science and technology throughout the world. On the basis of the success already achieved, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would endeavour actively to promote technological cooperation and exchange with other countries in order to ensure the peaceful uses of outer space.

22. **Mr. Guan Jian** (China) said that as required by General Assembly resolution 54/67 of 6 December 1999, at its forty-third session the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had resumed its consideration, as a matter of priority, of ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes. During the deliberation on that agenda item, the question of the prevention of militarization and of the arms race in outer space had received great attention. A number of delegations had expressed the view that the development and testing of weapons systems in outer space and the utilization of space systems for military purposes would intensify the militarization of outer space and trigger a cosmic arms race. That went against the tide of the times, violated the fundamental principle of peaceful uses of outer space established by the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies and was not conducive to the maintenance of international peace and security.

23. An international legal system should be established to prevent the militarization of outer space and an arms race there and the relevant international agreements should be concluded expeditiously on the basis of negotiation. The resolution adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) reaffirmed the notion that progress in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space was in the common interest of mankind and that the prevention of an arms race in outer space was an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in that field.

The Committee must accordingly devote adequate attention in its work to consideration of the question of preventing the militarization of outer space and a cosmic arms race.

24. The Chinese Government had consistently held that the ultimate purpose of the exploration and utilization of outer space must be to create a better space for the survival and development of humanity. The space activities conducted by all States should contribute to friendly cooperation and social progress and to the maintenance of international peace and security. Although the total demilitarization of outer space had yet to be realized de jure, it undoubtedly represented the direction in which the development of international space law should now go. In that connection, it was necessary to negotiate and conclude as soon as possible an international agreement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

25. At the Committee's forty-third session, the delegations of Bulgaria, Colombia, China, Greece, Iran and the Russian Federation had submitted a working paper containing a proposal that, at its fortieth session in 2001, the Legal Subcommittee should begin discussing a new agenda item on the feasibility of formulating a unified and comprehensive convention on international space law. In the view of the Chinese delegation, that was a constructive proposal that deserved the active support of the international community, especially as the work on such a convention promised to be a daunting task that could be achieved solely through the political will to strengthen cooperation on the part of Governments. The Chinese delegation stood ready to work with all delegations for the early achievement of that goal.

26. At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly had approved the recommendation of UNISPACE III to declare 4 to 10 October of every year World Space Week in order to celebrate at the international level the contributions of space science and technology to the betterment of the human condition. In order to ensure the successful celebration of the first World Space Week, the Chinese Government, as one of its main initiators, had elaborated and implemented its own programme for 2000. The programme's objective was to disseminate knowledge, reject superstition and pseudo-science, increase space knowledge among young people and encourage the general public's participation in and support for space activities. A variety of events had been held in many cities, including a conference attended by more than 2000 representatives of all sectors of society, the issuance of commemorative stamps, the publication of popular space science materials geared to young readers, the donation of books to universities and schools and the organization of popular space science exhibitions. China would continue to contribute to the great cause of exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

27. **The Chairman** suggested that the list of speakers on agenda item 83 be closed on 16 October 2000, at 6 p.m. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed to that suggestion.

28. *It was so decided.*

29. **The Chairman** announced that delegations wishing to participate in the general discussion under the agenda item should inscribe their names on the list as soon as possible, in order to facilitate the full and productive utilization of the Committee's resources.

*The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.*